

An Essay  
on  
The Rights and Ceremonies  
of  
Medical Science

Respectfully Submitted  
to the  
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# Rites and Ceremonies of Medical Science

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That handkerchief did an Egyptian to my mother  
give; she was a charmer, and could almost read  
The thoughts of people: she told her, while she kept  
"I would make her amiable, and subdue my father  
Entirely to her love; but if she lost it,  
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye  
Should hold her loathly, and his spirit should  
After new fancies.

OTHELLO. Act. III. Scene IV

It is frequently asserted  
that superstition will decline, in propor-  
tion as the mind of man becomes  
more enlightened, and the rays of  
civilization and education become  
more extended. This may be, and,



no doubt in many instances is the fact,  
but certainly there can be found no  
one, even in this, the nineteenth,  
century, when the extension of know-  
ledge, and the cultivation of the  
intellect are so generally attended  
to, who would endeavour to prove  
such assertion to be universally  
applicable; indeed, among mankind  
there appears to exist an innate  
tendency to believe in the direct  
agency of superior powers, in certain  
extraordinary or singular events,  
or in omens, and prognostics; and  
many instances could be cited, from  
which it could be indisputably  
proven, that men of the highest literary  
and scientific attainments, have  
been, and still are, who place

the most implicit reliance in accidental circumstances, which are supposed to be derived either directly or remotely from the spirit world.

It cannot, therefore, create either astonishment or surprise, if those means, which certainly do to a considerable degree prevent the mind from imbibing superstitious ideas, fail in some instances; that we should observe among those of the lower orders of society, whose means do not allow of the benefits of mental culture, a decided tendency towards the mysterious, and we can, moreover, readily imagine that in the darker ages, mankind were wont to attribute the most common occurrences to beings either real or



supposed, whom superstition vested with superior might, in whom uncommon power was supposed to dwell, and, consequently, from whom counsel was sought in doubt, consolation prayed for in affliction, and relief applied for in suffering.

From such circumstances as the latter, it has happened as Lord Bacon tells us, that up to his time "witches have always held a competition with Physicians", and at the present day, our would-be scientific astrologers, more ordinary fortune-tellers, and absurd spiritualists, frequently interfere with the most ably directed efforts of scientific professors of medicine.

The spirit of charity

and fellow-feeling with which man-  
Kind is endowed, naturally would  
lead to an inquiry for those  
means calculated to relieve  
their fellow beings, and from this  
we may suppose that in times  
gone by, or among ~~uncivilized~~  
nations at the present day, when  
ordinary remedial means fail,  
recourse is had to charms, incan-  
tations, and amulets to procure  
relief.

It is interesting to the inquiring  
mind, to observe what articles  
were held in the highest esteem,  
as being the most effectual agents  
in eradicating disease.

Galen tells us that six hundred  
and thirty years before the



Christian era, Neehepsus, a prince of the Egyptians, highly recommended for dyspepsia or weakness of the digestive apparatus, a green jasper stone cut into the form of a dragon and surrounded with rays; this it was supposed would produce immediate relief, if applied externally to the affected part. The Indians of our country have a superstition somewhat similar, and use as a preventive and cure for colic, a species of jasper which is to be applied to the navel.

Homer has informed us that the bleeding of Ulysses was arrested by means of a charm. Among the popular poetry of the seventeenth century we find the following,

"Tom Potts was but a serving man,  
But yet he was a doctor good;  
He bound his kerchief on the wound,  
And with kind words he staunch'd the blood."  
And Sir Walter Scott says in his "Lay of  
the last Minstrel."

"She drew the splinter from the wound,  
And with a charm she staunch'd the blood!"  
Pepys also, has a latin incantation  
for arresting hemorrhage.

at the present day, among our  
citizens can be found numerous  
pretended soothsayers, claiming



to be the seventh son of the seventh son, who can not only staunch the flow of blood, but by passing their hands over persons affected with intermittent fever, can effect a complete cure, no matter how obstinate the case may be, nor to how many methods of treatment it has been subjected.

In some parts of our continent at the present time, particularly among those classes who profess the Roman Catholic religion, the various parts of the body even to the ends of the fingers, are supposed to be under the special protection of a host of saints; and we have lately read that the veiled nuns in the convent.

of Montreal, wear as a preventive of tooth-ache, the hair of some ancient ecclesiastic whose long devotion and austere piety, have rendered his body capable, like the hem of Christ's garment, of dispensing relief.

The cases of cure that have really been effected by the use of such means, can only be referred to the influence of the mind over the functions of the body; and that the mental faculties have power of themselves to produce wonderful changes in the physical system, is everywhere acknowledged, and frequently observed. We know that fear or grief can change, and sometimes in a single night, the color of the hair - Sir Walter Scott, in



his "Marmion" thus writes

"No deadly fear can time outgo,  
And blanch at once the hair."

Southey also mentions the same fact in the repentance of Eleanora, who had sold his soul to the Devil, for the purpose of obtaining the lady of his affections.

Very many cases could be adduced to prove what influence the mind possesses over the body, but space will admit the insertion of but a few other instances. Fright has cured epilepsy, and restored paralysed parts; Valerius Maximus relates the case of two matrons who died from joy on seeing their sons return in safety from the battle at the Thracians.

The above instances are perhaps sufficient to show the character of the superstitions of the different ages, and the means whereby they were frequently effectual in the removal of disease.

But, when we consider the subject thoughtfully, there arises a question in our minds, are not the people of the present day guilty of a superstition, that, although it differs in character from that of older times, still is perhaps, rather more disastrous in its effects. We refer to the veneration, - in very many instances, the superstitious veneration, - with which many individuals are wont to regard established routine. This is true not only with regard to medicine, but to every other



department of Science, and even in the every day occurrences of our social circles. All things must be done in accordance with rites and ceremonies that are approved, and the man who deviates from the supposed standard, is laughed at as an impostor or a fool. Is not this almost a superstition? Did not this give rise to the persecution that followed the master minds of the world? Did not the superstitious idolaters sacrifice the Christians to their wrath? and did not the blind advocates of a medical faction drive Hahnemann from his home?

This may be designated, veneration, but certainly the term superstition could well be applied to it.

How many are there who have seen  
the wonderful effects of homoeopathic  
medicines, have even felt the potency  
of remedial agents administered in  
accordance with the law Similia  
Similibus Curantur, and yet how  
many, from their devotion, fall back  
upon the system of the old school.

It is indeed true, that "the dog will  
return to his vomit again, and the  
sow which was washed, to her  
wallowing in the mire."

Let us, therefore, review some of the  
most prominent methods of treatment  
that are adopted by Physicians of  
the older, and in some respects,  
antiquated method of Practice, and  
after having pointed out the fallacy  
of the principles upon which they



are based, nay, even the serious injury that frequently results from their employment, we shall be the better qualified to arrive at the conclusion which has been above referred to, viz. That they are regarded by many with almost a superstitious veneration.

A Physician of the old school is called upon to visit some poor sufferer, and after taking into consideration the manifest evidences, arrives at the conclusion that the patient is laboring under a degree of inflammation. His course is now clear, and calling to his aid the usual "antiphlogistic treatment" — comprising the terms "sedative, 'refrigerant', weakening," — most frequently resorts to depletive

methods, the chief of which is blood-  
letting. Now it must be evident to  
those possessing even limited mental  
capacities, that the application of cooling  
lotions to an inflamed surface, is  
merely, for the time being, palliative, and  
that no permanent benefit can be  
derived from their use; the abstraction  
of blood, however, is considered as not  
merely palliative, but curative, and is  
recommended mainly for "depressing  
the activity of the heart and blood  
vessels;" and thus by removing the  
cause, the mastery of the disease is  
to be gained. It has, however, been  
elaborately and lucidly demonstrated,  
that although an increased activity  
of the heart certainly exists in  
violent inflammation, yet this



preternatural condition does not precede, but succeed the engorgement of the capillaries; that the abnormal manifestations observed in these radicles when inflammation is at its height, do not depend on any vis a tergo, and there exists no altered activity of the heart during the development of the inflammatory process; it is evident, therefore, that the quieting of the action of the heart and bloodvessels, is incompatible with a rational method of treatment.

It is not alone in inflammatory diseases, however, that the abstraction of blood constitutes the main resource of the allopathic practitioner, for in a long array of diseases there is scarcely one, in some part of the treatment

of which, venesection has not been recommended, and although the dangers resulting from its employment have been discussed and fully detailed by the adherents of this empirical school, yet do they, notwithstanding, continue to make use of it; it must necessarily be observed, therefore, that as no substitute for this operation — whose results, mostly unfavorable and injurious, have undergone no change since the period of its first performance — has been adopted, in this particular at least, the practice of the old school has not advanced many steps towards that boasted perfection, which, as is said it shall attain.

Mercury too, that "Herculean medicine,"



has been in all its varied preparations,  
has been much used and as frequently  
abused, by the Allopathic profession,  
and could we imagine the jealous  
Euryptheus to have imposed on Hercules  
as a thirteenth task, the bearing upon  
his brawny shoulders of the mass of  
this drug which has been adminis-  
tered in the form of medicaments, the  
undaunted hero would have undoubt-  
edly been compelled to succumb.  
The frequency with which it is admin-  
istered, and the massive doses in  
which it is employed for almost  
every malady acknowledged "neath  
high heaven's domain", are well  
known to be very injurious by those  
who persist in their culpable practice.  
The unfortunate victim is subjected

to a systematic course of drugging, which is patiently submitted to in hope of regaining lost health, until at length, exhausted by a protracted and unsuccessful treatment, he is turned adrift a helpless wreck to endure new agony from each chilling blast, and, were it not for the precious boon of Homoeopathy, totally beyond relief.

True, persons laboring under certain diseases, recover after having been stuffed with enormous doses of mercury, but this is most frequently owing to the power of the vital forces being sufficient to withstand the action of the mineral, whilst the disease is eradicated by the recuperative energies of nature; or, as may be in



some cases, the specific action of the drug.

Such a course of procedure is highly censurable; the allopathist, however, has been taught from time immemorial, to regard large quantities of mercury as most potential in the cure of numerous diseases, and although experience,—the sheet-anchor of the school—has proved the converse, still he persists, not considering how many of his fellow beings have experienced the agonies of death, and "all the sad variety of pain" merely from its employment.

Quinine, another formidable remedy of the old school, from the enormous doses in which it is daily prescribed, has produced its thousand evils.

"The mere recounting of the history

of this drug for the last three centuries, says Teste, is sufficient to bring lasting shame and disgrace upon the allopathic profession; and the amount of disease and suffering engendered by its abuse, are calculated to arouse the deepest sentiments of Compassion in the mind of the humane observer. To so great an extent has this drugging the system with quinine been carried, that cinchona bark has become quite an important article of commerce, and, as Humboldt informs us, upwards of 500,000 pounds are annually exported for the purpose of being manufactured into quinine. If, however, as is asserted, the forests of Bolivia, from whence the principal supply is obtained, are no longer



able to withstand the attacks to which they are annually subjected, suffering humanity will indeed have occasion to rejoice at the pleasing prospect of the speedy annihilation of one of the many fruitful sources from which much suffering is derived.

A long array of counter-irritants, with Cauteris actual and potential, now present themselves, and these, though exceedingly troublesome and even dangerous, are much less so than most other allopathic applications. They are employed chiefly in consequence of the well known principle of the economy, that two powerful abnormal actions seldom coexist in the same individual; and there is scarcely a disease, esp-

-specially if it be of long standing, in which one or more of these annoyances have not been employed.

Blisters, in consequence of their frequent use, acquire considerable importance in the arena of scientific torture, yet how seldom do they prove availing. The moxa, one would suppose, should only be regarded as a relic of the barbarities of past ages, yet such has been the progress of allopathic science, that it is still employed from the wanton lack of knowledge of better and less hurtful means. Out of the pale of the profession, the term seton conveys no idea of an abominable operation, but the drawing of a skin of silk or piece of tape through human flesh,



grates harshly upon the ear; whilst the virtues of the fonticule à pois, though much lauded by medical men, are scarcely appreciated by those who have endured the tortures of the magic pea.

Although it was supposed the actual cautery was thrown aside upon the expiring of the flames in the brazier of the heroic Larrey, yet we have abundant evidence for believing that its use has been revived with all its horrible details, by the progressive school, though fortunately to no such extent as formerly. We read very lately in the London Lancet, that Ricord, who has devoted himself to the consideration, description, and terminations of the venereal disease, and who is supposed to have a large experience in all the varied modifications of the affection, from the simple chancre, to the thousand

greatest cities of the world, and the editors of  
medical periodicals, bowing their professional  
heads in superstitious awe to their God, publish  
this treatment, and recommend it to the young  
practitioner of a school of medicine, which,  
however, at the present day is shaken to its  
base by the viroards made upon it by  
Hæmæopathy. A century ago, the fortress  
under cover of which these rites and cere-  
monies that have been above mentioned  
had been performed, had acquired strength  
from age; the army of the sons of Ascu-  
lapius believed that their stronghold was  
insurmountable, their influence with the  
populace was permanent, and that  
they themselves were the greatest benefac-  
tors of mankind; but there arose a man  
whose mighty mind, disgusted with  
their practices, sought for and found



a rational and certain means of rescuing  
his fellow men from the ravages of disease,  
allopathy and death. Boldly launching  
forth his flag to the breeze, and calling  
upon his fellow men to follow him to  
the rescue of humanity, in the very face  
of the towers and bulwarks of the old  
school - nature rejoiced at his  
discovery - the stars of heaven shone  
more brightly, and the winds rejoiced  
as they unfolded the uplifted standard  
bearing the inscription *Similia Similibus  
Curantur*. Hard has been the struggle,  
bold has been the shock, the stronghold  
whose foundation was laid in centuries  
long past, totters to its base, the army  
of Hahnemann increases and boldly  
presses forward. Truth is on its side, is  
mighty, and will prevail.

